

Testimony

in favor of S.B. No 1088 An Act Concerning Services for Individuals with Intellectual Disability.

Hello, my name is Katie Banzhaf and I am the Executive Director of STAR, Inc. Lighting the Way based in Norwalk, CT. I am a resident of Trumbull. I am here today to testify and to also read the testimony of Rosmary Lovallo of Greenwich.

We are testifying in favor of S.B. No. 1088 An Act Concerning Services for Individuals with Intellectual Disability.

Thank you Senator Gerratano, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee for raising the bill and we urge you to pass it out of committee.

On August 7, 2012, Jimmy Natale moved from Southbury Training School to STAR. He moved to our group home known as Stoler House. In November 2013, his sister Rosemary spoke at our annual Gala. This is what she had to say.

My brother James Natale is 72 years old and resided at Southbury Training School since age 20, a total of 52 years. It was strongly suggested to me by Jimmy's case manager at Southbury, that we look into alternatives to Jimmy's current residence at Southbury due to the uncertainty of Southbury's future.

STAR was suggested to me by Jim's case manager and with great hesitation and much anxiety a visit to STAR was arranged. Our beloved brother's future weighed heavily on my brother Sandy and me. We were very closed minded on our initial visit to several STAR residences, however our concerns were short lived. After several visits and meetings with the staff of STAR we began to feel that they had the potential to impact Jimmy's life in an exciting new way. An opening at Stoler house was available that would fit Jim's needs based on their evaluation of him, and we genuinely decided to explore this option at Stoler House for Jim. Stoler House is close to home for us and would give us the opportunity to visit Jimmy on a more frequent basis.

We now found ourselves at a huge crossroad for Jim and of course he is the most important person in this, so with that said we arranged a first visit to Stoler for Jim. After his initial visit Jim was ready to move and start a new life. He was very excited about the new residence, new friends and the staff. We of course were still a little anxious so a sleepover for Jimmy was arranged. After the sleepover it was obvious Jim was ready to pack his bags and move in!

After numerous meetings both at Southbury and STAR, and a few tears a plan for jimmy was put in place that would assure continuity of care and make this big transition in all of our lives easier. To this day I ask Jimmy, Jim, did we make the right decision and he always responds "YES WE DID ROSEMARY". I am

so pleased that this move for Jim has opened up a whole new life for him and Sandy and I are so grateful to all the people involved making Jim's life so full of life. He actually has a better social life than me.....

Rosemary wanted to be here today, but due to her work schedule she couldn't attend. This is the additional testimony she asked me to read for her.

"My brother, James Natale was a resident at Southbury Training school for many years(back when he was accepted there was not many options for the mentally handicapped. Today we have choices, such as a group homes . Making the transition was hard, Southbury was all Jim & I knew.

I was enlightened with another option of STAR group homes. After much debate Jimmy & I decided that STAR Stoler House, would be a safe and comfortable and better place for him live and thrive.

Southbury Training school was a good facility years past. But as changes and options are now available I feel Jimmy is in the best place he could be.

When asked about his move from Southbury to a STAR he always says, WE MAKE THE RIGHT MOVE!!

Thank you for your attention,

Rosemary Lovallo

I would only like to add that Jimmy is one of three individuals STAR has supported through the transition from Southbury. Their parents and siblings would echo Rosemary's words were they available to attend today. Collectively we urge you to pass SB. 1088.

Thank you

Katie Banzhaf and Rosemary Lovallo